

Navigating Roommate Conflicts

Communicating with or Confronting your Roommate(s)

If you start to notice that your roommate does not want to talk with you, may get annoyed with you over little things, and/or may leave the room when you are there, you should recognize these as signs of potential roommate issues. If a problem is addressed early, there is a better chance of it being worked out amicably. Most roommate conflicts are the result of miscommunication or, in most cases, a total lack of communication. If you can communicate effectively, it will be much easier to develop a comfortable living environment for yourself and your roommates.

How to address the issue:

- Approach you roommate in private.
- Confirm that this is a good time for both of you to talk. If either of you feels rushed or blindsided, the conversation will be less effective.
- Be direct. Discuss the issues with regard to behaviors rather than personality traits. This tactic is less likely to put your roommate on the defensive.
- Be patient. Listen to your roommate and remember that there are two sides to every story. As you are listening, try to put yourself in your roommate's shoes.
- Each person should be given an opportunity to share their perspective on the roommate relationship and potential areas of tension.
- Revisit you roommate agreement. All students are provided a standard roommate agreement and are required to fill them out within the first few weeks of classes. You should have a copy available with your RA. Which of the guidelines are working and which of them need to be reconsidered?
- Remember that a solution will probably involve each person giving something and getting something. The solution may not be your ideal scenario, but it should be an improvement on the current state of things.

Healthy communication tips:

- Talk to your roommate directly when something is bothering you. Don't discuss it behind their back because this can cause a breakdown in trust between you.
- Be direct. Be clear about what is bothering you. If you don't tell your roommate that there is a problem, they won't be able to do anything about it.
- Remember that communication works two ways: talking and listening. Neither one is effective without the other.
- If you create a win-win situation, then the conflict is more likely to be resolved. Evaluate the needs of both sides before a solution is proposed, and make sure the solution is acceptable to both parties.
- Respect each other's differences. Difference is a part of life. Get to know each other and establish common ground.

Avoid responding with your emotions. Criticism is bound to happen and your natural reaction is going to be to criticize back, but that is only going to compound the problem. Learning to accept criticism is going to help you communicate and live with your roommate. If you both find that you are approaching the limit and things are not being resolved, agree to take some time away from the discussion to cool down.